

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 6866

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GR UR

SUBJ: SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ILICHEV VISITS

ATHENS

1. DURING ATHENS STOPOVER SEPTEMBER 15 EN ROUTE TO NICOSIA FROM ANKARA, SOVIET DEPUTY FONMIN LEONID ILICHEV HAD 3-HOUR MEETING WITH GREEK FONMIN MAVROS. GREEK PRESS AND RADIO/TV REPORTED ILICHEV'S STATEMENT AFTER MEETING THAT EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN MUST BECOME A ZONE OF PEACE AND SECURITY. HE ALSO REPEATED FAMILIAR SOVIET THEMES CONCERNING RESTORATION OF CYPRIOT INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, AND WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES FROM THE ISLAND. HE CALLED FOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO SETTLE CYPRUS CRISIS, NOTING "THE CONCORD OF VIEWS OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ON THIS BASIC ISSUE." ACCORDING TO ILICHEV BILATERAL RELATIONS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED. MEETING WAS ALSO ATTENDED BY GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY UNDERSECRETARY BITSIOS, SECRETARY GENERAL TZOUNIS AND SOVIET AMBASSADOR YEZHOF. LATER IN EVENING, MAVROS WAS

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HOST AT DINNER IN ILICHEV'S HONOR AT GRANDE BRETAGNE

HOTEL. ILICHEV DID NOT, SO FAR AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, SEE PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS DURING HIS VISIT.

2. VRADYNI SEPT 16 GAVE EXTENSIVE ACCOUNT OF ILICHEV VISIT, ASSERTING THAT IT IS PART OF INTENSE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY OF WHICH ATHENS IS THE EIPCENTER. APOYEVMATINI AND TA NEA PUBLISHED SHORT NEWS STORIES AND PICTURES. ATHENAIKI CARRIED ONLY A PICTURE. RIGHTWING ESTIA, IN ADDITION TO SHORT NEWS STORY, WAS ONLY AFTERNOON PAPER TO COMMENT EDITORIALY. ESTIA RECALLED THAT ILICHEV CLAIMED WHILE IN ANKARA THAT SOVIET UNION'S POSITION CONCERNING THE CYPRUS DISPUTE IS "NEUTRAL." THIS STATEMENT, ESTIA ASSERTED, CAUSES CONFUSION IN GREECE BECAUSE TURKEY PLACES A DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION ON THE MEANING OF THE WORD "INDEPENDENCE." THEREFORE THE SOVIETS MUST CLEARLY STATE WHAT THEIR POSITION IS IF THEY WISH TO AVOID CHARGE THAT THEY ARE USING CYPRUS FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES.

3. COMMENT: EARLIER THIS WEEK NETHERLANDS AMBASSADOR TOLD EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT MAVROS HAD ASSURED HIM THAT ILICHEV'S TALKS IN ATHENS DID NO MORE THAN RESTATE ALREADY WELL-PUBLISHED SOVIET POSITION ON PRESERVING INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF CYPRUS AND KEEP SOVIET SC INITIATIVE FOR CYPRUS CONFERENCE ALIVE. APPARENTLY NO NEW GROUND WAS BROKEN IN THESE EXCHANGES. AMBASSADOR METAXAS IN MFA IN LATER CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS PROFESSED TO BE UNINFORMED ABOUT ILICHEV'S VISIT BUT REPEATED THAT GOG BELIEVED IT MUST KEEP ALL POSSIBLE AVENUES TO NEGOTIATIONS OPEN IRRESPECTIVE OF FACT GOG CONTINUED TO VIEW SOVIET INITIATIVE AS PROPAGANDA PLOY. WE WILL BE MAKING FURTHER INQUIRIES IN COMING DAYS. KUBISCH

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